

Message Text

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ACTION OC-06

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 CCO-00 SS-15 L-03 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 DODE-00 INRE-00 /040 W

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O R 231525Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1045

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

USCINCEUR GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 10491

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AFSP, ACOM, ET

SUBJECT: POUCH INSPECTION

REF: (A) ADDIS 10437, (B) STATE 234289, (C) STATE 234185

1. DEAN OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS (CAMEROONIAN) ACCOMPANIED BY REGIONAL DEANS (MOROCCO, MEXICO, INDIA, USSR AND FRANCE) CALLED ON FONMIN KIFLE WODAJE EVENING SEPT 22, AND INFORMED HIM ON BEHALF OF ENTIRE CORPS THAT CORPS CANNOT COOPERATE WITH EPMG ON MATTER OF INSPECTION OF POUCHES, AND THAT NO CHIEF OF MISSION HAD AUTHORITY TO PERMIT POUCHES TO BE OPENED. HE THEN ASKED THE COOPERATION OF THE MINISTER IN UNDERSTANDING POSITION OF THE CHIEFS OF MISSION IN THIS MATTER, AND SAID THAT IF EPMG DECIDES NONETHELESS TO PROCEED, CHIEFS OF MISSION HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO REFER MATTER TO THEIR GOVERNMENTS.

2. ACCORDING TO MEXICAN AMBASSADOR WHO REPORTED BACK TO AMERICANS GROUP, KIFLE WAS SURPRISED AT CORPS'S STAND. HE SAID IT WAS A MATTER OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AT A GIVEN MOMENT WHEN EPMG HAD INITIATED IMPORTANT MONETARY REFORMS, AND THAT AT SUCH A GIVEN MOMENT, SPECIAL PROCEDURES MAY BE ESTABLISHED FOR A LIMITED PERIOD THAT COULD TEMPORARILY LIMIT CERTAIN PRIVILEGES OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS. THUS HE HAD ASKED FOR "UNDERSTANDING" OF

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CORPS. "I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO INTERPRET YOUR ANSWER,

BECAUSE IT IS A PROCEDURE FOR A LIMITED PERIOD AND WILL BE EFFECTED ALWAYS IN PRESENCE OF YOUR EMBASSY REPS," MEXICAN REPORTED HIM AS SAYING.

3. HE THEN ASKED CORPS TO BE MORE COOPERATIVE, SAYING THERE WAS NO INTENTION TO HARM OR DIMINISH TRADITIONAL PRIVILEGES ACCEPTED IN INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE. IT IS VOLUNTARY REQUEST AND IS NOT BEING PRESENTED FORMALLY. HE INSISTED, HOWEVER, ON A SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT WITH CORPS THAT WOULD NOT ATTACK CONFIDENTIALITY OF DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE. EPMG HAD SET UP PROCEDURE TO BEGIN SEPT 22, BUT DELAYED PUTTING IT INTO EFFECT UNTIL SEPT 23, PENDING CORPS RESPONSE.

4. KIFLE THEN ASKED THAT ALL GOVERNMENTS SUSPEND DESPATCH OF POUCHES TO ADDIS UNTIL SATISFACTORY PROCEDURE IS REACHED, SUGGESTING TEN DAYS AS A PERIOD OF REACHING SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT.

5. DURING EXCHANGE THAT FOLLOWED, KIFLE REPEATED THAT MEASURE WAS DIRECTLY RELATED TO DECREE ANNOUNCING NEW MONETARY REGULATIONS (ADDIS 10436, 10450, 10451,) WAS TO BE IN EFFECT UNTIL JANUARY 1977 WHEN PROCESS UNDER MONETARY DECREE IS COMPLETED, WAS NOT AIMED AT ANY PARTICULAR MISSION BUT PURPOSE WAS TO CLOSE ANY POSSIBLE WAY FOR ETHIOPIAN MONEY TO ENTER ETHIOPIA BEFORE MONETARY EXCHANGE COULD TAKE PLACE. HE SAID PROCEDURE HAD PRECEDENCE IN OTHER COUNTRIES, CITING NIGERIA IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES.

6. INDIAN AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT SINCE ONLY HIGH VALUE CURRENCY WAS BEING DISCOUNTED AND THIS WOULD BE COMPLETED BY OCTOBER 19, PERHAPS EPMG COULD FOCUS ON THAT DATE RATHER THAN JANUARY. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT OUTGOING POUCHES WERE APPARENTLY NOT INVOLVED IN EPMG'S STATED PURPOSE. KIFLE SAID HE WOULD CONSULT EPMG AUTHORITIES ON THIS POINT, AND THOUGHT OCT 19 DATE MIGHT BE NEGOTIABLE.

7. CORPS HAS THUS MADE ITS DEMARCHE, BUT IT CLEAR EPMG INTENDS PROCEED AND THAT AS OF TODAY SEPT 23, ALL

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POUCHES WILL BE SUBJECT TO SEARCH. INDEED WE HAVE ALREADY HAD APO MAIL BROKEN INTO WITHOUT PRESENCE OF ANY AMERICAN, AND EPMG CUSTOMS BEGAN OPENING AIR FREIGHT AS WELL ON SEPT 23. CHMAAG WITH MY APPROVAL HAS SHUT DOWN ANY FURTHER SENDING OR RECEIVING OF APO MAIL, AND IS ASKING HIS HEADQUARTERS IN EUROPE (USCINCEUR) FOR DETERMINATION OF STATUS OF APO MAIL IN INTERNATIONAL LAW, I.E., DO APO MAIL SACS ENJOY SAME PRIVILEGES AS

DIPLOMATIC POUCHES? SHOULD WE PERMIT THEM TO BE OPENED
OR NOT? I WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING ANSWER TO SAME
QUESTION FROM DEPT SOONEST, AS WELL AS DEPT COMMENTARY
CONCERNING INSPECTION OF AIR FREIGHT.

8. MEANWHILE CORPS HAS APPARENTLY BEEN GIVEN TEN DAYS
OR SO TO COME UP WITH SOMETHING THAT WILL SATISFY
ETHIOPIANS EVEN THOUGH INSPECTION OF POUCHES IS ALREADY
IN EFFECT AND EVIDENTLY WILL CONTINUE AFTER TEN DAYS. IF DEPT
HAS ANY THOUGHTS, I WOULD WELCOME THEM. OUR INTENTION, HOWEVER,
IS TO SEND ANY INCOMING POUCHES BACK THAT MAY ARRIVE IN NEXT
FEW DAYS AND SEND OUT NO POUCHES FROM HERE.

9. WE HAVE NOT YET INFORMED EPMG UNILATERALLY OF PARA 3
STATE 234280 IN VIEW OF CORPS UNANIMITY EXPRESSED TO
FONMIN LAST EVENING. BEFORE DOING SO, I WOULD
APPRECIATE ANY FURTHER DEPT THOUGHTS IN LIGHT OF
FOREGOING, AND I WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE KNOWING WHAT
CONSEQUENCES DEPT HAS IN MIND IF EPMG PERSISTS IN
THIS COURSE OF ACTION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ADDIS10491
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760359-0922
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760930/aaaaazco.tel
Line Count: 135
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION OC
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 ADDIS ABABA 10437, 76 STATE 234289, 76 STATE 234185
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 JUN 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <29 JUN 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POUCH INSPECTION
TAGS: AFSP, ACOM, ET
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006